



Pre-Writing Activities

Pre-writing activities generate questions and ideas that will help students to get started on their writing. These activities can be done individually, in pairs, in small groups, or as a whole group depending on the writing task and time allotted. Match these activities with sample texts that demonstrate the type and purpose of writing task. Sample texts should provide a model for writing, inspiration to get creativity going, and motivation to do their best work!

Activity	Description	Sample texts or resources to be used
Illustrated alphabet book or Picture Dictionary	Write the letters of the alphabet, A through Z, on each page of a booklet to create an alphabet book or picture dictionary. For an alphabet book, students can draw a picture or word(s) starting with the letter on the page. For a picture dictionary, students can draw and label pictures starting with the letter on the page.	
Choosing Sides	Pick an issue or current event and write a strong statement that will generate differing opinions, e.g. boys are better in science than girls. Under the statement, draw a line designating “Agree” at one end and “Disagree” at the other end. Have students check or put an X on the line to show their opinion and to note a reason under it. After discussing student opinions, read a text about the issue and see if students’ thinking changes.	
What’s your opinion?	Write an interesting yes/no or multiple choice question, e.g. do dogs make better pets than cats? Make a chart for students to mark their votes. Gather results and help students to express and listen to opinions that differ from their own. Staff may also want to lead students in creating a graph to capture the data they collect.	
Brainstorm Web	Invite kids to create a giant web of ideas, using a starter word in the middle of a piece of paper. Add to the web by connecting a thought or idea to another thought or idea. Each addition is a one word, in a circle, with a line to the connecting word or idea. As students build the web, have them share out their thinking as they connect ideas.	



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Circles	Challenge kids to find similarities and differences in three objects, topics, etc. Draw three large intersecting circles, two on top, one on the bottom. Where circles overlap, list commonalities. Where there is no overlap, list unique features. The goal is to get at least one commonality in the center and at least two in the overlapping areas.	
Group Poem	Inspire kids to write poetry. Start with a sentence or phrase, explaining that it's the first line of the poem. Everyone will add a line or two, building off the previous line. Students will collaborate, using descriptive language and poetic elements.	
Get the Facts!	Ask students to research local and national news stories and/or reference sources to gather information about a particular person, issue, topic or event. Have them answer the questions of who, what, where, why, and when on post-it notes to create a fact chart.	
Letter to the Editor	Get kids to work together to write a letter to the editor. Outline the basic parts of the letter and generate topics to write about. Have students vote on a topic to address. Start with a sentence or phrase, explaining that it's the first line of the letter. Everyone will add a line or two, building off the line before. Students will collaborate, using persuasive language.	
Story Board	Provide each student with a storyboard outline, e.g. 3 squares, 6 squares, 8 squares, etc. Each square would represent a scene or phase of their story. Have each student illustrate and write out a description for each square.	
Story Starter	Write the beginning line of a story, e.g. once upon a time, there lived a handsome frog. (For ideas, go to http://thestorystarter.com). Everyone will add a line or two, building off the line before. Students will collaborate, using transitional words, plot elements, and figurative language. The final story should have a beginning, middle and end.	